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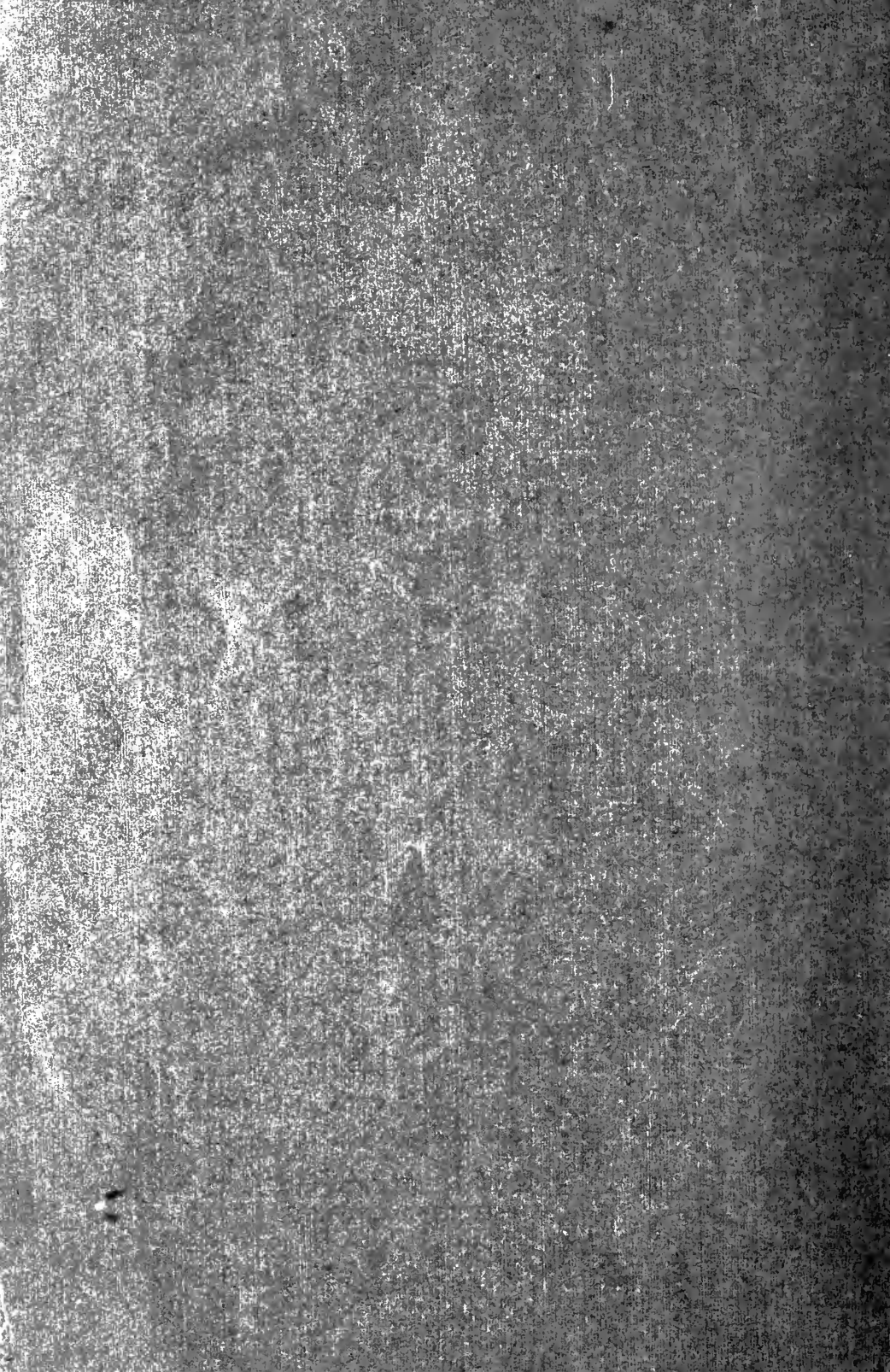
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MILTONIC ENIGMAS

BY

PROF. JOHN A. HIMES

Editor of Milton's *Paradise Lost*



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MILTONIC ENIGMAS

The term enigma with reference to the problems that meet readers of Milton is used from a conviction that when a true solution is reached it must meet the announced conditions and exclude alternatives. A dash of present-day laxity at the meaning of a word or passage is pretty certain to land in error. The chief qualification needed in the student in addition to a grasp of particulars is the ability to translate figurative into plain language, or perhaps as often from Biblical into Classical metaphor. It is safe to assume that Milton was possessed of accurate scholarship as well as of sound common sense and we shall be less ready to believe him capable of blunders or bad taste. It pays richly to dwell upon his words long enough to think vagueness out of ourselves not out of him. These items are prepared from full annotations in manuscript of the poems and are printed for the consideration of teachers and others who are willing to compare them with Milton's text and so far as possible with what is said by other editors. Opinions from any such upon these comments will be gratefully received. A number of the items have been published in the *Modern Language Notes* of Johns Hopkins University.

I. ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT DYING OF A COUGH.

The most misleading error in the interpretation of this early poem I believe to be a failure to distinguish between natural and grammatical gender. Masculine Winter must of course woo one of the opposite sex. What he seizes upon is the *anima* (soul, or physical life) which is feminine whether in youth or maid. But critics have transferred the gender of the noun to the sex of the child and thus obscured the meaning of important lines.

Dr. Thomas Newton's edition (1753) says: "In some

editions [Warton specifies Tickell's and Fenton's] the title runs thus—*On the Death of a Fair Infant a nephew of his dying of a cough*; but the sequel shows plainly that the child was not a nephew but a niece and consequently a daughter of his elder sister, Anna Milton (Phillips)."

It is difficult to see how "a nephew of his" could have been inserted in the title except by one who knew, probably by Milton himself. On the other hand, it is **easy** to understand how some editor who was ignorant or forgetful of his Latin gender thought that the conditions required the child to have been a niece and simply dropped this portion of the title. The wrong way once entered upon was easier to follow than to retrace.

The passage whose interpretation is affected is ll. 50-56. Nothing is more common at the death of a child than to guess at what it would have become if it had grown to manhood. Inasmuch as the Infant's father "held a situation in the Crown's Office in Chancery" what would have been more natural to expect than that the child at maturity would fill the place of a jurist or statesman? This conjecture might express itself in associating the genius of Astraea (Justice) with the child. The next line (53) is in recent editions printed thus:

"Or wert thou [Mercy] that sweet smiling youth." The bracketed word was "suggested in 1750 by John Heskin to fill the obvious lacuna." Masson says, "There can be no doubt that Mercy was meant." Notwithstanding this high authority I am not convinced. "Smiling" does not fit mercy as an epithet, or "youth" as an appositive. *Tearful* would come nearer as an epithet, because of mercy's relation to pity and any appositive would have to be feminine to agree with *miserericordia*. The fact that Mercy is throned between Justice and Truth in the *Hymn on the Nativity* (141-146) is altogether irrelevant.

I am confident that the "sweet smiling Youth" is no other than the boy Ganymede (γάμος-μέδομαι, joy-inspiring) who on account of his beauty was snatched from earth by Jove's Eagle (Aquila) to succeed Hebe (Youth) as the cup-bearer of the Olympians. The second suggestion, therefore, as to the Infant's destiny is that with the

spirit of Ganymede (Joy) to animate him he might become a poet as his uncle was already in conscious ability and aspiration. Both nephew and uncle were heirs to the same love of music from the same ancestor, the elder Milton.

But what has that to do with Ganymede? There are two main sources of poetic inspiration, very real and positive sources, Joy and Sorrow. Milton has many studies of their manifestations in his poems early and late. They usually appear under names familiar in mythology, Urania and Calliope, Pan and Sylvanus, Ganymede and Hylas, Fauns and Nymphs. In a more extended and intimate comparison they are portrayed in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The home of these two passions in the heart is figured in *Par. Lost* IV. 705-8, based on *Prov.* XIV. 10. Ganymede and Hylas are paired in *Eleg. Sept.* 21-24. Ganymede is Joy, as his name indicates; Hylas (ἵλη, wood), Sorrow scarcely less beautiful and loved, is related to the sombre Sylvanus, like him associated with the Nymphs (Grief), by them caught bathing in a shaded pool and borne away into Neptune's realm. Ganymede is rapt by Jove's Eagle into the sky and given a permanent abode on Olympus. With the temperament of either Hylas or Ganymede the Infant might have become a poet, but could Milton for an instant hesitate as to which to prefer for his nephew? In spite of crude assertions to the contrary Milton is in fact the most cheerful of poets, but in a profound, not in a shallow or superficial way.

A third possibility looms up. The Infant may own the genius of *that crowned Matron*. The interpreters have not ventured to carry her identification beyond the poet's own addition, *sage, white-robed Truth*. She does in a measure resemble Spenser's Una, but she is more. She is the Matron by eminence, the "towered Cybele, mother of a hundred gods," all light-bearing divinities, *that heavenly brood* presently mentioned. She is white-robed by reason of the light in which she dwells. Her temple at Athens was called the Μητρόων, her priests were Galli (cocks) because of their office in heralding the day. Her

name, Cybebe or Cybele is apparently related to κύβη, or κεφαλή that is, the head, the citadel of Truth's empire.

Now the third alternative is seen to be the possibility of the Infant's development into a Philosopher. Milton was at this period imbibing Greek philosophy at Cambridge with unquenchable zest. Similar advantages to his nephew at the proper age might train him for the headship of one of the departments at the University—departments identical with the divine offspring of the crowned Matron.

It remains to be noted that the trio, the jurist (or statesman), the poet (or musician), and the philosopher (or teacher) are *let down in cloudy throne to do the world some good*. They are indeed kings and, though of ill-defined authority, rule the spirit more effectually than many who sit on thrones of state.

As to lines 76, 77 Masson remarks: "One can hardly say that this prophecy was fulfilled in Edward Phillips and John Phillips, Milton's nephews, the brothers of the fair infant born after her (his?) death, yet they are both remembered on their uncle's account." Masson must have felt—his hesitation shows it—that at such a time as this professed divination with respect to his sister's natural descendants, had Milton been weak enough to attempt it, would have been mockery, but he found in the prophecy of Isaiah (chaps. LIV-LVI) consolation for childlessness whose exalted beauty and tenderness must have appealed strongly to him and impelled their application to his sister under the conditions that occasioned their first utterance. The culmination of the promises is in LVI. 5—"Even unto them will I give in my house and within my wall a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off." This is not cheap fortune-telling; it is Scriptural promise even to the emphatic redundancy repeated in the poet's lines.

II. HYMN ON THE NATIVITY.

After the natural relations of the Event have been fixed interest is centered in two prophecies quoted from

Isaiah and Jeremiah by the evangelist Matthew. The first of these to need elucidation (*Matt.* IV. 15, 16; *Isa.* IX. 1, 2) appears in lines 168-172 of the Hymn—*The old Dragon underground*, &c. Very little is added to our comprehension by the usual reference to *Rev.* XII. 4 and XXII. 2. What special thing does the Dragon stand for? The Prophecy from Isaiah gives us a clue.

The Dragon under ground is the power of darkness risen out of the region and shadow of death—that is, ignorance of God and His word—extended all over the pagan world and spread like twilight even over the land reserved for God's people. The coming of Christ gave light, expelled the darkness like a substantial thing, first from Judea where He was born and His birth divinely heralded, and then from Galilee where He lived. Thus of more than half the territory of Israel the usurper was dispossessed and lost his sway. Not without struggle, however. The hard-hearted cruelty of Herod in slaughtering the male infants of Bethlehem was the stroke of the scaly horror of the Dragon's tail in the desperate effort to avert defeat.

It was indeed the evidence of defeat. The chief mourners over the butchery, it must be noted, were not the mothers of Bethlehem, but Rachel at Ramah. What does this strange transfer of scene and actors signify? Milton following some of the church Fathers tells us. Guided by a passage quoted from Jeremiah (*Matt.* II. 18; *Jer.* XXI. 15) he makes "wailing and loud lament" announce the flight of the gods and the muteness of the oracles. This is the same as the wailing and lamentation prophetically referred to Ramah the place of oracles within the territory of Benjamin, son of Rachel. Well nigh two millenniums before the birth of Christ, it will be remembered, Rachel had introduced idolatry into Israel when she stole and secreted her father's images and it seems to have persisted among her descendants in Mount Ephraim (*Judg.* XVII). At Ramah the prophet Samuel lived and Deborah near by. The very air of the place was pervaded by the spirit of prophecy (*I Sam.* XIX. 18-24).

The loss of her "gods," then, is what grieved the spirit of Rachel and the murder of the Innocents was the signal for the passing away of the system of visible or audible signs of a present deity, evil or good, and the introduction of pure spiritual worship. The flight of Apollo from Delphi was simultaneous with the parting of the Genius from Ramah, and the mountains of Ephraim re-echoed to the same wailings as the resounding shore at Cumae.

No one knew better than Milton that an idol is nothing and that it is the sin it represents which Christ came to destroy. The grim image of Moloch is powerless but the spirit of War is a hideous fact which needs to be expelled from the world. The Deadly Sins are the realities which Christ came to abolish; and these incorporated under their heathen names are Peor (Lust), Dagon (Covetousness), Ashtaroth (Pride), Thammuz (Jealousy), Ammon, same as Rimmon (Gluttony) and Moloch (War or Murder). Osiris wages perpetual strife with his brother Set, known to the Greeks as Typhon. The two are apparently related as Law and Vice. The sons of Belial (Vice) once carried the ark of the covenant as a charm or amulet into battle (*I Sam.* IX. 3-22; II. 12). The letter of the law is sometimes antagonistic to its spirit. Lawyers were often the most malevolent opponents of Christ who was eventually crucified by the law against which he had committed no offense (*John* XIX. 7). Christ's mission was to supersede the Law with the spirit of Love but his vicarious obedience did not surrender men to their passions. Like the infant Hercules he strangled as two serpents both condemning Law and Vice with its deadly sting.

These considerations prove that Milton's poetry does not consist in mere sonorous proper names with which he endeavors to create "a vague sublimity," but it conveys, when understood, the loftiest and purest theology under the most fascinating imagery. Perhaps no other false notion than this of vagueness has led to as many gross errors and such absolute indolence where real thinking is so richly rewarded.

III. L' ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO.

This study of the two moods, the cheerful or mirthful and the studious or melancholy was no doubt suggested by King Solomon's self-application to the consideration of "wisdom and madness and folly" (*Eccl.* I. 17). The central and major part of each poem is the domain of moderation in both the cheerful and the serious mood and herein is found the way of wisdom. Madness and folly are incidentally dealt with or rather thrust aside at the beginning for the real task of the surveyor.

The cheerful man regards melancholy as a disease, and so it is in its extreme manifestation. In this form it is the offspring of "Cerberus and blackest Midnight." Since the father supplies the masculine element, the *animus* (mind, intellect or reason) of the child, to assign the paternity of Melancholy to the *rabid* Cerberus (*Æn.* VI. 421) is to ascribe madness to her. Where ignorance is symbolized by darkness, madness is rightly wedded to Midnight blackness. But if to the cheerful man Melancholy seems madness to the studious one Mirth is folly. Hence the latter denies any paternity to Mirth and thus attributes mental vacuity, i. e., idiocy, to her. To that unregulated Mirth may easily degenerate.

A more sympathetic view of Mirth derives her from Venus (Love) and ivy-crowned Bacchus (moderate stimulus of wine). A *sager* poet (Solomon in *Cant.* II.) finds her origin in Zephyr (the lover "leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills") and Aurora (the Spring morning) in their glorious frolic among the buds and flowers and birds of May. Among men she is called "heart-easing Mirth"; in Heaven the residence of spirits uncompounded of bodily organs she is named Euphrosyne.

A sober estimate of Melancholy makes her the daughter of Saturn (Cronus, Time) and "bright-haired Vesta" (the Hearth-fire) and establishes her in her appropriate symbol, the Lamp-light. Her dim essence surrounded by the dark is compared to her advantage in usefulness

with Twilight (Prince Memnon's sister) and Star-light (Cassiopea the Ethiop queen on the throne of Night).

I have nowhere seen a recognition of the extraordinary compliment in *L' Allegro* to Milton's favorite poet Pindar in the "Lydian airs married to immortal verse." Pindar was the ancient apostle of moderation whose triumphal odes are a reasonable antidote to "eating cares" that might swerve one from the path of "sane happiness" (*εὐγίας ὄλβος*). Pindar freely used Lydian music and mentioned approvingly "Lydian flutes" (O. V. 19), "Lydian harmony" (N. IV. 45) and "Lydian tunes" (O. XIV. 17). Moreover, as if in allusion to the famous singing swans of the Lydian Cayster Pindar was known to the ancients as the "Dircaean swan." It is also worth noting how perfectly Milton's "soft Lydian airs" convey the soothing tones of flute music. Compare it with Dryden's prosaic "Lydian measures" to decide which of the two poets came to Nature directly and which saw it "through the spectacles of books."

Shall we rest in this? It might seem as though Pindar would be a fair set-off among the ancient lyrical poets to Musaeus and Orpheus. But these three have not sounded the ultimate notes of Mirth and Melancholy. That remains to their Biblical counterparts the writers of the *Song of Songs*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Lamentations*. These are all on the same subject—the spiritual Jerusalem. It was the King of Jerusalem who expressed his disappointment with the life of that city at its most prosperous era (*Eccl.* I. 1-3). Then the "weeping prophet" lamented her captivity in Babylon and received the promise of her redemption (*Jer.* L. 4, &c.) But the author of the *Song* foresaw her eternal union in bliss with her Redeemer. The *Song* was fitted to "Lydian airs" when Paul with this union as a theme exhorted the churches in Lydia to the use of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing and making melody." St. John brings the theme to its consummation (*Rev.* XXI) in his message to the same churches. The encomium of Milton on the Lydian airs is easier to understand from this point of view.

One who has seen in the Harvard Library the copy of Pindar thickly interlined with notes in Milton's own hand will appreciate how the English poet valued the Greek. It was Professor F. N. Robinson, I think, who placed the precious volume on my knees. During the half hour that it lay there I fear I was but faintly interested in Bunyan's Bible, the mss. of Burns, Byron, Shelley, Scott and other literary treasures of the Sumner Collection that were shown me.

It is commonly taught that of the two portraits here considered Milton resembled the latter, the melancholy type. But it cannot be denied that in his comparison he has steadfastly set the former in the higher place of origin and power. Joy in heaven is Euphrosyne, one of the Graces; Melancholy has no name there, for she has no place. By his pathos Orpheus was able to "draw iron tears down Pluto's cheek" but Pindar invading the nether gloom with his triumphal Odes would have raised a revolution in the dismal kingdom and conferred immortality upon a host of shades. Milton, as elsewhere noted, was eminently a cheerful poet and triumphed over despondency that might with reason have clouded his latter years.

COMUS.

"There is a tradition that the incident of the Lady's being lost in the woods was suggested by an actual experience of Lady Alice Egerton and her brothers in the Haywood forest near Ludlow. It is said that night overtook them in the wood and that Lady Alice was for a time separated from her companions. It is more probable, however, as Masson and Church have suggested, that the story grew out of the poem than that the poem grew out of the story."—*Rolfe*. The foregoing judgment is strongly confirmed by considerations of propriety. It would be intolerable to have the young people set to enacting a scene which would shadow the honor or reputation of the Lady—the only conclusion in a case like this. The actors we may be sure were entirely de

tached in the spectators' mind from the dramatic incidents.

The gross misconception of incidents, characters and names in the Masque grows out of the endeavor to understand the matter literally. The Masque is an allegory designed to convey a wholesome warning to the English church and people. Without adducing the outstanding facts of the situation which will occur to students of English history, as threatening the purity of society and private life we desire to say at once that the play is directed against the doctrine and practice of Free-love and all that it implies. Comus the magician impersonates the corrupt influence; the Spirit is the Genius of the Seventh Commandment, or Chastity; the Lady is the Christian Church of England; her two Brothers and defenders are Reason and Conscience. The significance of the other names will appear in due order.

The Spirit has his mansion "before the starry threshold of Jove's court." Heaven is ruled by Love, not by the Decalogue, but the Virtues which the place demands from those who enter are gate-keepers and exclude the vicious. Especially is this true of Chastity (*Matt. XXII. 30*).

The immediate scene of the Spirit's movement against his enemy Comus is, however, clearly defined. It is the island of Great Britain whose unique relation to the other lands and to the seas is given in the Spirit's Prologue. Though properly a part of the land surface of the globe, because of its isolation and envelopment by the sea, it is a part of Neptune's empire rather than Jove's. It is distinguished from the other islands which are allotted to inferior "tributary gods" (l. 24) that in clouds bring Neptune their tribute of rain and hail and snow, either directly or through rivers and wear as sapphire crowns the stars in the blue heavens over their heads. But Britain's importance is evinced, not as often taught by its division into four governments, each presided over by a section of the great blue-haired deities but by its assignment to the armorial bearings, its *quartering* upon the escutcheon of all the great sea-powers to be worn over

the heart in token of their obligation to protect and defend the island, as they had done less than fifty years before when it was threatened by the Spanish Armada. Rightly understood, Shakespeare has nothing so magnificently patriotic.

It is this favored land so defended by the sea from human fleets and armies that Comus has invaded with his infernal following from their ranges on the continent. His parentage is significant, Bacchus and Circe. The tipsy Bacchus furnishes the *animus* (reason or intellect) the sorceress Circe supplies the *anima* (the instincts, or physical life). The transformation caused by the draught of Comus affects the mind as that of Circe affected the body. It is not a device for the convenience of the actors, as the critics guess, but the presentation of a moral truth that the perversion of the mind is more serious than distortion of the body. As long as the mind remains and recognizes the physical plight, there is hope of restoration but when the mind refuses to recognize its degradation all is lost.

The revelries of Comus are staged for the night. The time for his activities to begin is set in lines 93, 94:

"The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold."

Even the natural meaning of these lines has been obscured by editors who guess that this is "the evening star," or more specifically "Venus" or "Hesperus," regardless of the fact that Venus never appears in the zenith ("top of heaven") after nightfall and the other fact that she often fails to illuminate the evening sky at all in the critical season for flocks. I venture to say that not all the instances quoted in illustration from other poets could have induced Milton to make such a blunder. But in early Spring such a skilled watcher of the stars must often have seen Leo with its representative star Regulus rising to the zenith as Aries was sinking below the horizon and flocks were being folded. That the lion

was a menace to flocks was recognized in Biblical and Homeric times (*Il.* X. 485; XII. 299).

With a strange inconsequence Shakespeare's "unfolding star" (*Meas.* for *Meas.* IV. ii, 218) is also cited as if it were identical with the folding star of Milton. The "unfolding star" is Sirius (*Canis Major*), reinforced, perhaps by Procyon (*Canis Minor*), which rises in the Spring before Aries in the morning and "guides the starry flock" (*Par. Lost* V. 709, 710). As the lion is the enemy, so the dog is the natural defender of the flock. For present purposes the procession across the heavens—Procyon, Sirius, Aries, Taurus, Leo—may be regarded as belonging to the same scheme, admonitory to the shepherd and herdsman.

The appeal to Echo (l. 230, etc.) contains certain features that require elucidation. Her *airy shell* is the vault of the sky which like a temple dome receives and rolls back the voices from below. But why does she have her residence in select parts of the world? Perhaps because she is best pleased to dwell where she can hear and repeat the sweetest sounds. The *margent green* of the Maeander is not the bank of the river but the leafy mountain range that borders its valley (*Il.* II. 868-9). At the foot of its northern slope flows the Cayster musical with its famous swans. The *violet-embroidered vale* is that of the Ilissus above Athens bordered by the violet-hued Hymettus and Pentelicus and vocal with its nightingales. This would abstractly seem to justify the selection of these places as the favorite abode of Echo, but would have a very remote relation to the subject of Chastity. But in the mountains about the Maeander are Ephesus and the churches established by St. Paul and admonished in his epistles to purity of life and to "speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (*Eph.* V. 19). The reverberations of these among the mountains were sweeter than even the swan-songs of the Cayster. In the vale of the Ilissus Paul (himself a nightingale of magic effect, *Acts* XVI. 25, 26) must have uttered sweeter and sadder notes "when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (*Acts* XVII. 16). The call of the Lady

in the absence of her Brothers to Echo is an outward sign of the Churches' resort to the Scriptures in times of moral and intellectual darkness. In the talk of the Brothers there is a clear distinction between the self-confidence in him who represents Reason and the self-distrust of him who stands for Conscience. It is also observable that the former assumes the initiative in formulating a philosophy of Virtue and its defenses natural and providential, the latter acquiesces and admires; the former is assured of his sister's safety, the latter is more hesitant and anxious.

The *cordial* offered by Comus (l. 672) to the Lady produces an intoxication of Pleasure on a larger scale than is promised by the single lapse into unchastity. It works a moral relaxation which rejects all restraint; it is more than the opiate which the *wife of Thone* gave to *Jove-born Helena* (l. 672) that *Nepenthes* (Νηπενθής) which caused her to forget her "faithful Menelaus" and under the management of Venus desert to the perfidious Paris. But Polydamna of Thebes was only a spiritual descendant of another Egyptian woman, the wife of Potiphar, who dealt in the same drug bought also at the Pharmacy of Asmodeus. But Helen accepted the drug and destroyed Troy in a ten years' war while the Hebrew youth rejected it and saved Egypt in a seven years' famine.

The antidotes to the magic of Comus are: First, the "*moly* that Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave" (l. 636); Second, the *haemony* recommended by a *certain shepherd lad* (ll. 619, 638); Third, (ll. 821-2) the *other means* used by *Meliboeus* old to reverse the enchanter's wand.

If my reasoning is correct, the *Moly* (Μῶλυ, doubtless from μῶλος, toil) is labor, physical or mental, Nature's corrective for idleness and vice. Homer's description of the plant (*Odys.* X. 302-306), *Bryant's Translation*, runs thus:

"The root is black,
The blossom white as milk; among the gods
Its name is Moly; hard it is for men
To dig it up; the gods find nothing hard."

In the next place, who is the *shepherd lad* and what is the *root* to the efficacy of which he testifies as a protection against the allurements of Pleasure? Certainly he is not, as pupils are constantly taught, Milton's friend Charles Diodati who, so far as we know, had no personal defects that made him *of small regard to see to* and who did not pretend to deal in any sort of magic in his medical practice. But even had it been otherwise who could forgive Milton for perpetuating the memory of his friend's personal defects? There is, however, a well-known historical character who records his own poor reputation for personal presence and who proclaims a supernatural specific against the world's vices. Since the Spirit, the speaker, is of no special generation but exists in all ages, he may find his friends in any age or country.

The *shepherd lad* belongs to the first century of our era and is no other than the Apostle Paul, a shepherd over the churches but as compared with the other Apostles only a lad, "as one born out of due time" (*I Cor.* XV. 8, 9). His bodily presence was weak (*II Cor.* X. 11) and his stature, as his nickname of Paul probably indicates, undersized, but his intellect was transcendent and excited to ecstasy by the contemplation of divine truth (*II Cor.* XII. 1-4). His *Haemony* (αἷμων, from αἷμα, blood) is the blood-stained cross of Christ, *unknown and like esteemed* by the world (*I Cor.* I. 21-25) but the highest product of heavenly wisdom. Its *prickly leaf* symbolizes the tribulation that attends its acceptance here and its *golden flower* its glory in the climate of heaven. This conclusion was reached before I knew of S. T. Coleridge's nearly identical interpretation of *Haemony* (*Letters* I. 406, 407 *Houghton's* ed.) Had Coleridge recognized the *shepherd lad*, he would have settled the meaning for all time. Paul in this masque of Chastity is the chief antagonist of the *dark-veiled Cotytto*, the goddess of impudent Pleasure at Corinth, and the great advocate of virginity (purity in man and

woman) before all to whom his letters come. (*I Cor.* VII. throughout).

Meliboeus (Μελίβοιος. Sweet-singer) should not now be hard to recognize. The epithet *old* following the name points to antiquity and at once excludes Edmund Spenser or Geoffrey of Monmouth, the favorite guess of annotators. Neither of the two, high as the former at least stood in Milton's esteem, could with any propriety be called *the soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains*. Meliboeus shows how to reverse the magician's rod and Milton does not require him to narrate the story of Sabrina.

King David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (*I Sam.* XXIII. 1), both an actual shepherd on the plains of Bethlehem and a shepherd metaphorically as a writer of sacred lyrics can very properly be placed at the head of lyric poets and musicians. Unlike St. Paul, however, he was caught in the snare of Illicit Passion and to *reverse* the enchanter's rod descended into the depths of *repentance* and recovered the favor of God through bitter suffering (*Ps.* LVI. 7-17).

David's innocent child, like Sabrina, suffered death for his parents' sin. Thus without a jar we reach a reason for the invocation of Sabrina. Called from the depths she brings with her precious *vial'd liquors*, the tears of penitence (*Ps.* LVI. 8). These, like life-renewing nectar, are evidence of "heart sorrow" and give assurance of "a clear life ensuing". The liquors are applied, like the waters of baptism, the outward sign of repentance and regeneration (*Luke* III. 3; *Titus* III. 5), to the breast, the lips and the fingers, for the purification of the affections, the words and the deeds.

In the invocation to Sabrina the adjuration of the sea-deities is not a mere form for the introduction of proper names to convey "a vague sublimity"; for every name adds a motive to make her propitious. The first three names stand for parts of the divine judgment on man in the third chapter of Genesis. Oceanus (Ὠκεανός, from ὠκίς, swift) is the stream of Human Life, no longer endless

but cut off by the fleeting years (19) in the penalty of Death (Neptune, the Avenger). Tethys (Sorrow) is wedded to Life in both man and woman. Then follow the Partners in the allotment of Time: Nereus the hoary-headed Past wrinkled with the brood of Sorrows (the fifty Nereids) he has begotten; the elusive Present (changeable Proteus, shepherd of Neptune's flocks, the clouds) the portentous Future represented in the race by scaly Triton the unfeeling trumpeter of calamities such as War, Famine and Pestilence, in the individual by Glaucus γλαύξ, the owl) the ominous monitor of personal misfortune and loss; then three alleviators of human suffering found in succession by St. Peter along the sea (*Acts* VI. and X.). Leucothea, the white-goddess, is Charity in the person of Dorcas who clothed the poor at Joppa; her spiritual son (Portunus) is Hospitality in the person of "Simon the tanner" who entertained the Apostle in his house by the sea-side; Thetis actuated Cornelius the centurion at Caesarea when his conduct illustrated the fundamental precept of Justice that like "God is no respecter of persons." Her feet are tinsel-slipped because she shows the way to Peace whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains

Last is the consummate plea to the Sirens in the name of Virginity itself, to the *dead Parthenope's dear tomb* and to the clear-voiced Ligea on her *diamond rocks*. But the profound significance and pathos of this appeal are lost unless we see under these names two virgins of Sacred Story, one of the Old Testament, the other of the New. Like Parthenope, Jephthah's daughter was bewept long after death (*Judg.* X. 1-20). Like Ligea with a golden comb *sleeking her soft alluring locks*, Mary of Bethany draws all the centuries with her hair that wiped the Saviour's feet—hair soft with the precious oil and alluring with its fragrance as well as the fragrance of her deed. Her throne on diamond rocks, is the Saviour's assurance of remembrance through all generations.

The Epilogue is tense with the rewards of Chastity—Love, Beauty, Grace, Activity, Repose, Color, Fragrance,

Balm. The physical is subordinated to the spiritual. Venus sits upon the ground and Jealousy (Adonis) is healed of his wound and his nature changed. The underlying motive is the "sage and serious doctrine of Virginity" (787) dramatized by Solomon (*Song of Songs*) and unfolded by Paul (*Eph.* V. 22-23). The marriage of Christ and the Church is the perfect union of Desire and the Soul as in the myth of Cupid and Psyche. As Wisdom (Minerva) sprung from the head of Jupiter so it is promised to the royal bride (*Ps.* XLV. 15, 16) that from her side the twins, Youth and Joy shall be born. This announcement is made only to those "whose ears are true"; that is, to those who can discern spiritual truth under material figures.

LYCIDAS

Editors of Milton, doubtless unintentionally, have come perilously near to showing him as an egotist and a boor. The opening of *Lycidas* has been seized as an opportunity for attributing to the young poet an ostentatious humility nearly akin to pride, as if he were reluctant to write the elegy because he was preparing for a greater task to which he felt himself called. True, he shrank from the duty, not, however, for this reason, but from a proper regret at having to notice so often the incursion of death. He was not thinking of himself, but of the distinguished men whose departure he had lamented in Latin elegies—Richard Redding, College Beadle, Dr. Lancelot Andrews, President of Winchester College, Vice-chancellor John Gostlin and Dr. Nicholas Felton, Bishop of Ely. He grieves over the frequency of the calls to this sad duty. His grief is increased by the consideration of the youth of this latest death. His friend's years and genius were unripe and not his own. Nothing could well be more detached from his own interests or more in harmony with the occasion.

Boorishness in Milton is assumed in the suggestion that the Fauns and Satyrs that attended the pastoral

pipings were Cambridge undergraduates and that "old Damoetas was Dr. Bainbridge, Tutor Chappell or some other officer of Christ's College. What an estimate of his fellow-students this would be, especially in so serious a poem! And "old Damoetas" applied to a superior functionary would be worse. Such an alumnus instead of being honored by students and teachers would properly be consigned by them at least to "the milder shades of Purgatory." The Satyrs and Fauns attracted to the pipings of the so-called shepherds were their own *caperings*, the Mirth and Fun with which they varied their sober pursuits and which may have been incorporated in the words of the *rural ditties* or supplied by themselves. Damoetas, nicknamed Polypheme (the Garrulous) is an old shepherd in the sixth Idyl of Theocritus and a proper representative of the *Tedium* which was relaxed by their gay humor. This harmonizes with the pastoral conception and frees Milton from the charge of a pretense to superiority, mixed with actual contempt, over his fellows and instructors.

We have noticed elsewhere the failure of annotators to meet the requirements of Milton's Astronomy. There is another instance in their interpretation of the lines, "Oft till the star that rose at evening bright
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel".

Most of them conclude that "any star that so rose" will do. This ignores the difference in stars implied in the restrictive adjective "bright" and also the identifying word *wheel*. There is a familiar aggregation including the Wagoner (Bootes) and the Wain (Ursa Major) dominated by Arcturus, the second brightest star in the northern firmament (Homer, *Il.* XVIII. 487-9; Strabo, *Geog.* I 1. 6; Milton, *El. Quint.* 35, 36, *Manso* 36, 37) that fits the conditions especially in accounting for the *westering wheel*. In a variant reading Milton had *burnished wheel* in which he evidently refers to a part of the Wain, but in the final form, though susceptible of the same relation it more significantly applies to the *turn* taken by

the constellation as it approaches the margin of the sky. *Westering* does not in either case mean, as lexicographers instruct us, "passing to the west" but *rounding* or *circling the west*. In the latitude of London the Wain does not set, but nearing the horizon sweeps around north-westward as along the slope of the sky. The joint vigils of the two friends in their high pursuits were prolonged far after midnight.

In Geography the guides are as untrustworthy as in Astronomy. Instead of leading by well-marked roads they seem to have a predilection for forcing a way through tangled thickets. "The steep" (l. 52) which seemed to need no name because of its being one of the best known natural features of the world has been groped for, even by Milton's great biographer of nearby Edinburgh, among the unfamiliar mountains of Wales. The ship that bore Edward King in issuing from the Chester estuary had its prow pointed directly at Fairhead the eastward thrust of Giants' Causeway with its basaltic columns, 550 feet high, the most conspicuous promontory of the Irish coast, further defined as replete with relics of the Druids. A modern account of the neighborhood is as follows: "The principal cairns are one on Colin mountain near Lisburn and one on Slieve True near Carrickfergus and two on Colinward. The cromlechs most worthy of notice are—one near Cairn-grainey to the north-east of the old road from Belfast to Temple-Patrick, the large cromlech on Mount Druid near Ballintoy and one at the northern extremity of Island Magee. The mounts, forts and intrenchments are very numerous" (*Encyc. Brit.* art. *Antrim*).

In seeking for the causes of the disaster to the ship Milton finds that the winds were perfectly at rest and the sky was without a cloud. The conditions were so auspicious that all precautions were laid aside and the mariners like those of the ship of Aeneas were lulled to sleep (*Aen.* V. 838-860). The thought occurs that had conditions been less perfect, had a fog filled the valley of the Dee or storm-clouds (the Nymphs) appeared toward

Fairhead to the north-west or about Mona to the south, more precaution might have been taken. It is a vain fancy, for even regard to the genius of King whose safety was committed to their care did not make the crew vigilant. Is there possibly a hint in the allusion to the fate of Orpheus at the hands of the Bacchantes that the sailors after the reputation of their sort were drunk as well as indifferent? The final blame is put emphatically upon the ship. Was it the ignorance or malignity of the builders, or both, that wrought an unseaworthy craft? These, certainly, under the figure of eclipse or malign planetary aspect were to Milton efficient causes of misfortunes. Even if there is no direct charge against mariners or builders there can hardly be a doubt that Milton's mind was traversing these questions.

The recollection of an easy bit of commercial geography at the right instant might have guarded John Ruskin against the slip he made in commenting upon the "broken metaphor," *blind mouths!* in line 119. His observation was strictly correct in itself when he said: "These two monosyllables express the precisely accurate contraries of right character in the two great offices of the Church—those of bishop and pastor. A 'Bishop' means 'a person who sees'. A 'Pastor' means 'a person who feeds'. The most unbishoply character a man can have is therefore to be Blind. The most unpastoral is instead of feeding to want to be fed—to be a Mouth. Take the two reverses together and you have 'blind mouths' ". It is all beside the mark and has misdirected scores of editors, hundreds of teachers and thousands of pupils.

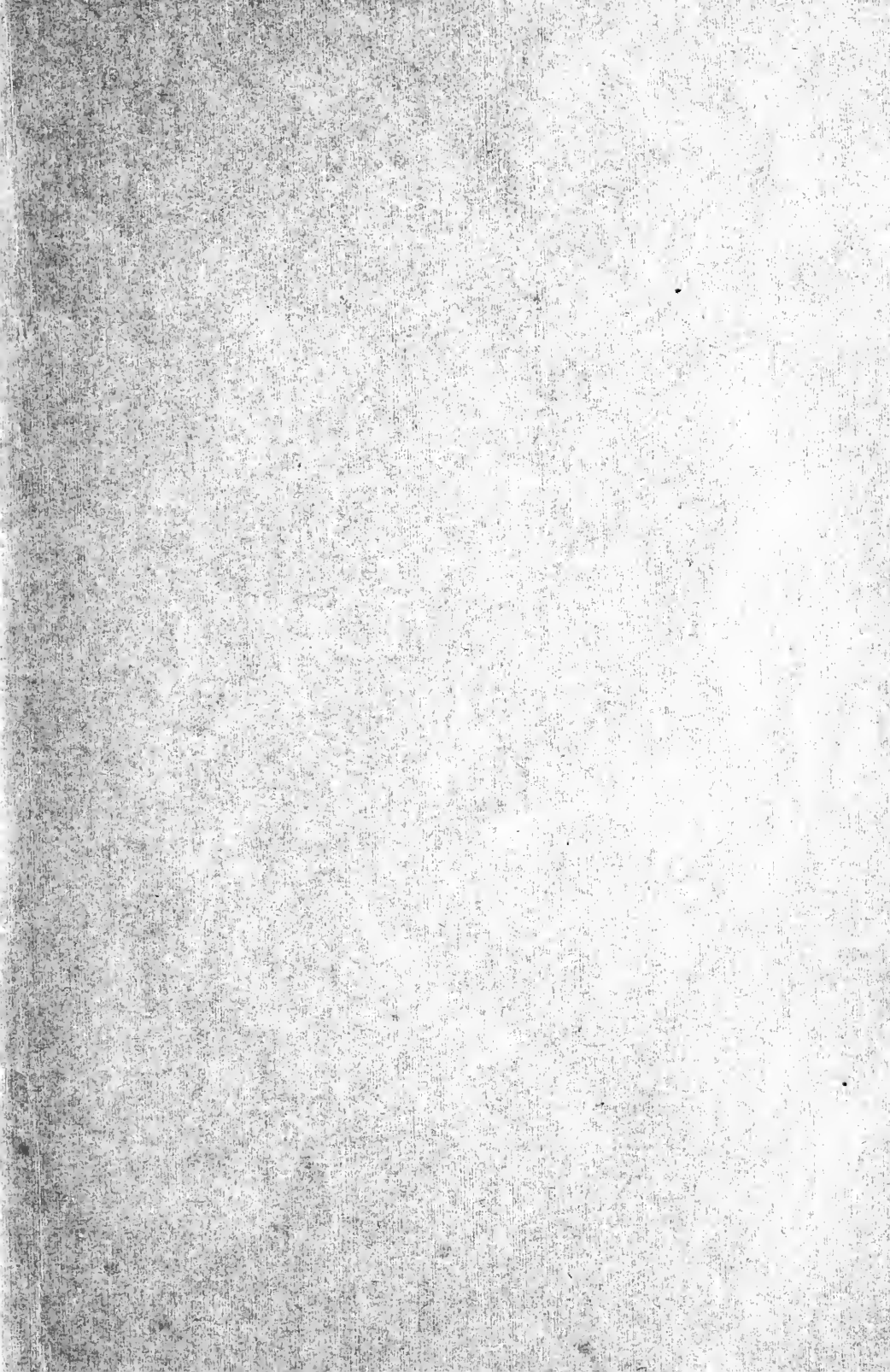
The old geographer Strabo uses the word *τῦφλόστομος* (blind mouth) to signify the choked-up mouth of a river. The term itself is applied to the channel of the Rhone (*Geog.* B, IV. ch. i. § 8) but its full value is shown in a description of Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber. The geographer specifies this as an instance of "a city without a port owing to the accumulation of the alluvial deposit brought down the Tiber. Vessels therefore bring to anchor further out, but not without danger..being

lightened of a part of their cargo, they enter the river and sail up to Rome" (*Geog. B. V. ch. III. § 5*). Plutarch (*Caesar* 58) refers to the same condition and tells of Caesar's devices to get rid of the obstruction.

It was not an unusual thing for rivers to be so choked up, but it was the Tiber in which Milton was especially interested by reason of its relation to Rome and the Church and St. Peter. The nautical term is used by the *pilot* of the Galilean lake to rebuke the shallowness, the ignorance, the spiritless utterance of the clergy which Isaiah had criticised in the religious leaders of an earlier day. Milton consciously imitated *Isa.* LVI. 9-12, and it may be noted how the blindness, the dumbness, the ignorance, the drowsiness and the indifference are summed up in the expressive term drawn from ancient navigation.

The unrecovered body of Edward King, superficially regarded as a mere lump of clay, in fancy visits the coasts once threatened by the Spanish Armada from Plymouth Harbor to the Orkneys. Thus it makes King the "genius of the shore", a representative of the spiritual forces that must guard England from the destructive errors suggested by the reference to *Bellerus* (monster) and the *monstrous world* at the two extremities of the island. The military angel, St. Michael at his post on the *guarded mount*, fortified with cannon in Armada days, is still scanning the seas toward *Namancos* (an ancient name for the district about the Spanish Cape Finisterre) and *Bayona's hold* (the Bay of Biscay, the gateway to Bayonne) for signs of hostile fleets and armies where once they rode, but his attention is called homeward where more insidious foes demand a different sort of warfare.





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